

**PROMOTING
YOUR GAME CENTER**



Best Deal

PROMOTING YOUR GAME CENTER

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PROMOTING YOUR GAME CENTER

On Promotion

Promotion will increase collections in your game center. Promotions give extra incentives for your customers to "buy your product." There are two basic types of promotions: One is "in-store" promotion to encourage current customers to come to the game center more often and/or play more games when they come to your center. The other type of promotion is designed to build and to introduce new customers to your game center. Any promotion that reaches one or both of these objectives will help to increase collections.

The ideas presented in this book are designed to help you plan effective promotions. Each promotion project has the potential to increase your collections significantly in the short and/or long run. There are other factors to be considered as well, such as, public relations and customer attitude enhancement. If your game center is considered as a positive impact on the community, and the players feel that they "get their money's worth" when they play games in your store, then the end result will be positive both for your profits and your business. In this way Public Relations and Customer Service are also parts of Promotion.

The details for implementing promotion ideas will vary for each game center to meet the needs and personality of players in different areas. New promotions must be used often to keep the positive momentum and player enthusiasm going for your center. A catalog of products that can be used for these promotions is included with this book. These are just a few of the game center promotion products and services provided by Business Builders.

LOGOS - Your Identification

It is important to have a good name for your game center. The name should be easily remembered and preferably short (three words maximum as a rule). Almost as important as the name itself is the **Visual Presentation** of the name, your **LOGO**.

Your logo is what people see on your signage, in your ads, on tokens and any other printed material relating to your game center. It should reflect the image of a fun, clean and entertaining place to go. It should also be a memorable design and not too complex.

A good logo design should have impact when printed in black on white as well as having a color alternative in one or more colors for signs and special events materials. This is essential to keep printing costs down for promotions and advertising.



A logo can be a simple standard design, like the name in a star shape as *Games People Play*, or complex with multiple color alternatives like *Electronic Wonderland*. Some game centers use the same logo design as the token they use, like *Pro Video*. Whatever design is selected for your game center, it should be used on every printed item relating to your store.

The way your game center looks will have a significant effect on the response. A bunch of games in a room may attract attention, however by using high impact decorations, signs, lights and posters a game center can draw much more traffic. The decor together with the logo will help project the image of fun and excitement that a game center should have.

There are specialists who can offer professional decorating assistance for your game center or you can "do-it-yourself." Some of the game manufacturers offer posters. There also are special game center wall decor posters available, Envirographics*. There are also specialty lighting systems available to give more impact to the environment. Wallpaper and paneling also can be used to create a better look for your game center.

Themes for game center decor can be effective if implemented well. Space, Western and Circus themes have been successfully used because there are a lot of good variations for decoration and promotional support materials to tie into the theme. Some critics of the theme approach feel it becomes a limiting factor. This may be true, however, if it is a popular theme and carried out in a tasteful way, the theme can also be an advantage for future promotions. For example, if a Western decor is used, Sheriff or deputy badges can be given as prizes and also offer special "privileges" to game center "deputy" players who wear the badges.

Whether you choose a theme or a general decor, it is important to have your game center look good. The walls, the ceiling, the change area, the floors, the windows, the arrangement of the games, and even the outside all reflect the image and success of the game center.

*Contact Business Builders for further information on Envirographics and other items for decorating your game center (408) 446-4400.

TOKENS

Make Promotion Easier

Tokens make it easier to give free plays. Free plays are one of the major “incentives” used in promotions. For this reason, token operations are more conducive to many promotion ideas.

Price flexibility offered by tokens has major promotion advantages. “Five for a dollar” or “two for one” offers can be made with them. Also, a moderate price increase can be implemented with three tokens for \$1.00, instead of twenty-five cents for each play.

Tokens given as prizes are sure to return to the game center cash boxes and have more “immediate” value than coupons. They also free-up the time needed for an employee to supervise coupon-free plays.

Tokens are also **convenient** for group game play offers. A large group can be invited for a special “deal,” such as 100 tokens for \$20.00, or 200 tokens for \$38.00, depending on the size of the group. These group offers will give extra incentives and may introduce many new players to your game center location.

When considering a token operation you should evaluate all of the factors they will effect. Most promotions are easier when games are operated using tokens. There are other advantages and disadvantages that must be considered as well. However, from a promotion viewpoint, tokens are highly recommended.



YOUR GRAND OPENING

Your **GRAND OPENING** is one of the most important promotions for a new game center. It is the chance to introduce your store to the community and to all your potential customers. A new store is news. It is the best chance for publicity as well as an excellent opportunity to start building a positive image.

There are so many alternative promotion programs for a grand opening that books are written on just this subject. Included here is just a listing of some of the possible ideas to include and things that should be done for an opening:

- Wait until the center has been opened a few weeks and “rough areas” smoothed out before your **GRAND OPENING**.
- Invite the local media and press to a “pre-opening” party. Have press kits with news releases and photos available. Let the media people play and have fun.
- Include one or more charity functions in your opening celebration to create good public relations.
- Use gimmicks to call attention to your location — i.e., searchlights or giant helium balloons.
- Use coupons and giveaways to encourage customers to come into the store and take away something to remind them to come back.
- Invite all potential players to participate in your **GRAND OPENING**. Use direct mail and other local media to advertise the events.
- Other promotion ideas presented in this book can be used for **GRAND OPENINGS** as well.

Remember — a **GRAND OPENING** is the best opportunity to get a regular customer base started. This promotion is worth allotting more time to plan, and more money to implement with an impact that will last a long time.


IN STORE PROMOTIONS



In-store promotions are those that are primarily designed to get your customers to play more games, more often. These are usually promoted within the store location with signs, flyers, employee-worn buttons or T-shirts and word-of-mouth. They can be advertised in outside sources as well, expanding the objective of the promotion to also bring in new customers.

In-store promotions include player clubs, tournaments, contests, or specific game promotions. These can be most effective ways to bring players to your center more often. In-store promotions that are well run also build enthusiasm and good will among your customers.

THE GAME CENTER CLUB



A special players club can be organized to help build and promote regular play in your game center. The most popular club concept is giving a card for "two, three or four free plays per week for a year." It may also give members other special benefits like "10 free plays on your birthday" or "free entry in all game contests." Players typically pay a fee to join the club and are issued a card that has numbers 1 to 52 around the edge. Each week as the free plays are redeemed the number of the week is marked off (i.e., April 16, 1982 is in the 15th week of the year — mark #15 on the card). The Game Center Name and Logo should be on the Club Card and any Club Rules can be printed on the back of the card. In this way your Game Center Club can be customized to fill specific needs.

THE GAME CENTER CLUB

Membership Cards



Plastic credit cards can also be designed for your Game Center Club. A special coating to allow the numbers to be marked off with a standard permanent ink felt-tip pen makes them easy to use. Although paper cards can be used, plastic is recommended because it will last longer and has a higher perceived value. These plastic cards range in price around 25½¢ per card for one color for 2,500 quantity*. The membership cards are usually sold for \$2 to \$5 in the game center (at 4 free games per week, 280 games for \$5 seems like a bargain).

Some game centers have been successful with a monthly club card — numbered 1 to 31 and good for 1 or 2 free plays per day in the month specified. These cards could be either plastic or paper — (they don't have to last a full year).

If the game center is in a shopping area, possibly the card can be expanded as a discount card for several businesses in addition to the game center. A clothing store offers 5% to 10% off to card holders; a restaurant offers 2 for 1 at lunch on specific days; a record store gives one record free if card holder buys four. Getting a group of retailers to sponsor a discount club card can prove to be a very good promotion concept.

* 1982 prices

Business Builders can provide custom membership cards. See THE PROMOTION CATALOG or call (408) 446-4400.

CONTESTS



Team Play Pinball

A team of three or five players (same as number of balls in the selected game(s)) enter this contest together. The rules are simple — each team member plays only one ball in the game. Teams compete against each other.

The concept can be used on single or multiple game contests. It is fun because it relies on the skills of all team members and cannot be overwhelmed by a single “pro” player. Teams can sometimes be randomly selected by a “draw out of a hat” for an alternative way to run this contest. **The same prizes should be given to each individual on the winning teams.**

Team Play Video

Similar to the pinball teams but in this case each member on the team must play a different video game. The video game scores can be converted to a common point system* allowing all games to have equal weight, or use a point ranking system like the one described for the 10 Game Rally. The total points of the team members determine the winners.

*Common point system — example — to equalize values of game scores for a contest.

	Game “A” Score	Game “B” Score	Contest Points
Fair	1 - 25,000	1 - 100	1
Good	26 - 50,000	101 - 250	2
Excellent	51 - 100,000	251 - 500	3
Expert	over 100,000	over 500	4

CONTESTS

Scorecard Contest

Print a special score card with four to six games listed and specific scores to beat on each game. The games listed should include at least two of the more popular ones in the center to encourage participation. Select scores that can be attained by the average player after three to five tries on an unfamiliar game. As each score is reached, an employee checks off that game on the card. Set a time limit of two to three weeks for the score card to be valid. After all the games are checked off, the card is redeemed for a prize.


The Game Center	
Game**	Score To Beat
✓ ASTEROIDS	123456
PAC MAN	789105
HAUNTED HOUSE	112345
DONKEY KONG	567899
HYPERBALL	101234

Beat all of the scores listed above and win.
Have employee verify each score.

You have two weeks to win or start over on this card

The Game Center	
DATE ISSUED: _____	
NAME: _____	
ADDRESS: _____ _____	
PHONE: _____	
EXPIRATION DATE: _____ _____	

**Pick appropriate games and scores for your location



NON-PLAY CONTESTS

Some effective contest promotions are not directly related to competition on the games. **Raffles, drawings, or “guessing” contests** often draw customers into the location and to influence game play. These are especially good because they appeal equally to the “expert” and “non-expert” players.

Raffles

Giving away prizes in a raffle is an excellent choice for building enthusiasm, and also to develop a mailing list of players. Legal constraints on raffles must be checked — “no purchase necessary” is an essential rule for these contests. However, your attendant should give out entry cards on request, rather than leaving them out on the counter. This will avoid “stuffing” the box. A few big prizes may be offered, like a stereo or T.V., and many free play packages of tokens or coupon books are given out to encourage frequent visits by the winners. Use the mailing list afterwards for a direct mail coupon promotion.

Daily Giveaway

A drawing everyday for **FREE TOKENS** is an effective promotion. Tickets with matching numbers on two sides are used. A player can get a new ticket at the game center each day. Players keep one half of the ticket and put the other half in a bin (Both halves have the same number.) At 6 p.m. each day a number is drawn and posted for 24 hours. The player checks the board daily and if his ticket number matches, claims the prize. For every day it is not claimed, the prize builds by 10 tokens. When the prize is won, the ticket bin is emptied and a new prize is started with 10 tokens. This is effective to keep players coming back.

NON-PLAY CONTESTS

Photomania

Take close-up photos of small area of the art or visual on six to ten games. Make the photos in such a way that it becomes somewhat challenging to identify the game. Put these photos on a poster with contest entry forms:

WHAT IS THE GAME? There Are Eight Different Games in This Photo Puzzle. Can You Name All of Them?



*games in example prior to 1980.

NON-PLAY CONTESTS

Photomania

IDENTIFY THE MYSTERY GAMES WIN 5 FREE TOKENS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____

AGE: _____

(ONLY 1 WIN PER CUSTOMER PER CONTEST)

Post the winner's names for them to collect prizes on a specific day of the week after the contest closes. Thus, they must come back to collect their prizes. The photos can be changed and a new Photo Mania Contest started. It is suggested to continue any one set of photos only for a week. "Word of mouth" may make everyone a winner, but this is okay because they still have to come back to claim the prize the following week.

Keep the names and addresses for a player mailing list.

PRIZES



Contest prizes are important. People like to win. Contest Winners like to be recognized.

Always Post The WINNER'S Names in the Game Center. This simple rule will guarantee the loyalty of your regular players - The Winners.

*Note: If the win is an unusually high score or, for a big event, take pictures (black and white) and send the information to your local newspaper to get extra publicity.**

*If player is a minor, check with parent or guardian for approval.

The prizes you give should have positive impact on your customers. They influence participation and help promote good will.

Free Plays as a prize is often the most cost effective. Coupon books or a certificate for tokens is always good. An unusual but fun alternative "token" prize is A TOKEN RUN. Give the winner 60 seconds to run and put as many tokens as possible in a bowl located across the room from a "source" bin of tokens — only using one hand! This, or variations on this idea often becomes an attraction of their own.

Prizes can continue to work as advertisements for the game center. As previously noted, T-shirts, hats, and other imprinted items make excellent prizes. As they are worn or used, these prizes become a reminder of the game center, of fun and of winning prizes.

Trophies or plaques are good and should also have the game center name on them. A trophy or plaque will most likely be put on display at the winner's home and be a reminder to play often.

There are hundreds of good prizes available. Keep on top of which items are popular with players and select prizes that will have greatest advertising potential.

Whatever you may select, keep in mind that a lot of prizes given to a lot of winners will encourage playing more.



The following is a partial list of suggested prizes.

FREE PLAYS

COUPONS

BAG OF TOKENS

PLAQUES

TROPHIES

T-SHIRTS

HATS

JACKETS

SHOE POCKETS

FRISBEE FLYERS

BUTTONS

AWARD PINS

PATCHES

BUMPER STICKERS

BELT BUCKLES

MEMBERSHIPS TO CLUBS

RECORDS

TICKETS TO MOVIES

TICKETS TO CONCERTS

TRIPS

CALCULATORS

CAMERAS

WATCHES

RADIOS

STEREOS

TV'S

A SHOPPING SPREE

and anything else that is popular among the players at your game center . . .

CONTESTS



Contests are usually in-store promotions — but can also be advertised to bring in new players. There are hundreds of different types of contests and tournaments. A few contest ideas are described here. They can be adapted to different games and various player groups. Contests should be flexible enough to include all types of players; novice as well as expert. The prizes should be good enough and plentiful to entice participation.

Tournaments and contests are not legal in all areas — check your local ordinances before starting. Entry fees are also an issue to check on from a legal point of view. However, if allowed, it is suggested to keep the fee to a minimum to encourage more participation. Determine if contest games are on free play or not for the event. This is a decision that will vary according to the area and type of contest.

Rules	Must be written and posted. Keep them as simple as possible. Run contests by the rules. Have well identified "referees" to settle any disputes.
Prizes	Post prizes for different categories and put them on display if applicable.
Publicity	Publicize all contests for at least two weeks prior to the event (exception — any continuous contests). Use signs, flyers, or employee wearables, such as buttons, and/or outside media ads to promote contests.

MAKE YOUR CONTEST PROMOTIONS FUN!

The following pages describe examples of game center contests that have been successful.

*See "On Planning a Tournament" article RePlay Magazine, Nov. 1979.

CONTESTS

10 Game Rally

Ten games are selected and listed for the contest. Each player can select the game or games on which they want to "enter". A new entry is needed for each game, but they can enter as many times they want. (Note: a player can only qualify on one game for semi-finals.)

Top two scorers on each game, eliminating duplicates, (i.e., 20 total players) play in the semi-finals. Five games are chosen for semi-finals. Each of the five games are assigned 100 points. Semi-final and final games are only played one time by each player. Top scorer gets 100, second gets 90, third 80, etc. In this manner the top 10 players on each game earn points. Each player's points for the five games are totaled and the top five scorers go on to the finals. Finals are scored the same as semi-finals, usually on different games. These results are then added to their semi-final scores to rank the winners and appropriate prizes are awarded.

Note: There are many workable variations of this contest.

Celebrity Challenge

A local D. J. or sports "star" should be a good draw for this contest which gives a lot of players the opportunity to win a prize. (The celebrity does not necessarily have to be a good game player).

The players may choose any game in the center for the challenge and try to outscore the celebrity for a prize. The prize should be some promotional item which advertises the game center — like a hat or T-shirt that says: "I scored more than Dr. John DJ at The Game Center."

Early sign-ups in specified time segments for this promotion are suggested to allow the celebrity a bit of a "breather" from time to time. If well advertised, the response to these promotions are usually quite good.

A celebrity who is a popular attraction and a chance to win is an excellent draw for players.

CONTESTS



Team Play Pinball

A team of three or five players (same as number of balls in the selected game(s)) enter this contest together. The rules are simple — each team member plays only one ball in the game. Teams compete against each other.

The concept can be used on single or multiple game contests. It is fun because it relies on the skills of all team members and cannot be overwhelmed by a single “pro” player. Teams can sometimes be randomly selected by a “draw out of a hat” for an alternative way to run this contest. **The same prizes should be given to each individual on the winning teams.**

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Good	26 - 50,000	101 - 250	2
Excellent	51 - 100,000	251 - 500	3
Expert	over 100,000	over 500	4

Continuous High Score

High Score Contests are usually the easiest to run. Put a sign over the game posting the current high scorer and score. If another player gets a higher score than the one posted, the on-duty employee is notified and a prize awarded. The new high score and scorer's name is then posted on the sign. This contest continues for as long as the operator desires. One suggested rule is **"one win per week per player on this game"** to encourage more participation. The prizes should be promotional items that will continue to advertise the game center outside the location, such as a pin with "High Scorer at . . (Game Center Name)" on it. Many game centers prefer to run the "High scorer of the Week" instead of a continuous contest. Either way, the objective is to encourage more play on the selected game.

Match Score-Win

A perfect way to build play on an old game that is ready for trade or resale is to give it away as a promotion. Often the increase in collections from the contest will be greater than its trade-in value — plus, you get the additional value of a good promotion. Pick a score that is reasonably high and yet not impossible to reach. Put a sign above the game "Match This Score — Win The Game" and the earnings are collected until someone wins it! This may vary from game to game — possibly you could try "Match Any of These Five Scores . . ." if the game is more conducive to this approach.

MORE PROMOTIONS

Bulletin Board

An easy-to-implement promotion and customer service is to provide a Bulletin Board for your customer's use. Use bright colored 3x5 cards (preferably with the game center name/logo on top) for players to write announcements, items for sale, lost pets or wanted notices. This board will attract people into the game center as well as provide a useful service for the community. The board can be decorated to make it look attractive and also to post information about promotion events, used games for sale, etc.

Window Display

Putting a special display or decoration in the game center windows is a good way to attract passing traffic. Bright posters of games, photos of players or a display of games in action in the window will bring more attention to your store. **"Window dressing"** is a traditional promotion and merchandising technique that is successful for department and clothing stores. Why not use "window dressing" at the game center? Although this concept is more appropriate for a shopping center location, a well decorated window has positive impact and attracts attention in any location. Be creative and use your windows as a visual display and advertising message for your game center.

Photo Display

An effective way to keep players coming back is to display their photos in a special place in your location. Keep a camera handy and from time to time go around taking pictures of the players. Also get pictures of contest winners and high scorers. Post them in key places around the game center. Players will come see their photos and their friends on display.



MORE PROMOTIONS




Resort Promotion

A Game Center at a resort or high tourist area most often attracts transient groups of players. Thus, the main promotion objective would be to continuously draw new players to the location. Resorts often have central reservations areas or tourist information offices that are an excellent place to distribute advertising material and coupons to encourage player traffic.

Other promotions for a tourist area can be tailored to the resort type. For example, at a ski area, offer two free games for used lift tickets at the end of the day; at a National Park sponsor a special sightseeing map; at a golf resort provide score cards for special tournaments that can be also redeemed for free plays after their rounds of golf. At a hotel or other resort lodging, special cards can be placed in each room inviting guests to play games, adding a few free plays for extra incentive.

Resort Game Centers often have high traffic levels if located well in the attraction area. Promotions can effectively increase traffic. Some in-store promotions can also influence play when the customers get an immediate response. Continuous High Score, Match Score, Score Card Contests, Photo Mania or Daily Give Aways are examples of promotions described in this book that are conducive to encourage players in Resort Game Centers. They can also be modified for the different types of locations.



2 for 1 Game

An easy way to pick up a game that may be slowing down is to feature a **2 for 1 Special** on the game for a short time. This may get people to renew their interest or influence new players to try it.

Get a battery operated revolving safety light to put over your **Special 2 for 1** game. The rotating light is certain to attract attention. Many of the games have a coinage option switch on the PC board that will allow you to give 2 credits per coin. This makes the promotion even easier to implement.

A small sign that says "**2 for 1 SPECIAL GAME**" posted over the game with the flashing light is an easy way to promote play. Another sign, "**Watch for Our 2 for 1 Special Games**" posted over the change counter can give this promotion extra exposure as well.

DIRECT MAIL

A mailing list of players or known potential players is one of the best advertising and promotion devices for any game center. Although mailing costs are high, if your list is good, the item you mail will reach the exact people you want to reach . . . *game players*. If you mail a coupon to players it is an inducement for them to come to the game center to redeem it. Unlike many alternative media, direct mail can be “more effective per reach” when evaluating the responses per exposure. Thus, consider obtaining a player mailing list at your location and using direct mail. This can be done using the club concept, contests or just a sign-up for a “Newsletter.” If you have over 200 names, bulk mailing can lower direct mail costs.

Newsletters

Regular newsletters can be effective and fun for the players. They can be designed in many different sizes and configurations. They can be sent out as frequently as desired (every two to three months is suggested). The following suggestions are offered for a newsletter program:

- Keep it simple. A one page self-mailer is adequate — either 8½ x 11 or 8½ x 14 folded.
- Get a design for the “masthead” including the game center logo and develop a standard format for each issue.
- ALWAYS INCLUDE COUPONS.
- Always feature players by name: high scorers, contest winners, special accomplishments, etc.
- Announce new games in the center and special events scheduled.
- Make it fun for players to read! Use illustrations and pictures if possible.





Postcards

Announce the arrival of a new game by sending players a special post card invitation to come try it. A photo of the new game on the front of the card is sure to attract attention, and a coupon for a free play on the game will bring them to the game center.

Post cards have many advantages with direct mail advertising: Postage costs less; and people usually look at a post card — i.e., no envelope to open or mailer to unfold. The coupon is visible when the card is picked up. Also, the game center name and logo will be clearly seen which helps to build and maintain awareness.



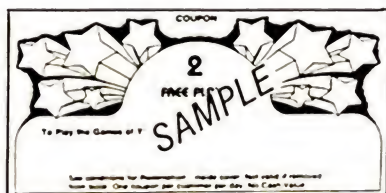
Mail Contests

Often special contests using direct mail can be quite effective as traffic builders. Send out a contest or promotion piece to encourage the person to come into your location. For example, a card with a lucky number on it and "Come see what you win at The Game Center," will get a good response if the "prizes" to be offered are of interest to the recipient. Suggest three to five larger prizes and free plays for anyone who responds.

There are many good direct mail promotions. Business Builders can help you with details for your direct mail program. Call (408) 446-4400.

COUPONS

Coupons come in all formats — although printing on a slip of paper is most common, coupons can be designed many different ways. They are found on many unusual items like — wooden nickels, balloons that are popped to redeem, candy wrappers, napkins, in fortune cookies, on the back of bumper stickers and many other places. There are books of coupons that can be given as prizes or sold as gifts. **Coupons are the life blood of promotion.** They stimulate the customer to respond.



Whichever way it is distributed, and wherever it is found, a coupon entitling the holder to free plays is one of the best promotion tools you can use. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that almost every promotion should include coupons in one way or another. Also, the number of coupons redeemed from any promotion, together with an increase in collections, is the best way to measure the response.

FOR PROMOTION

“Giveaways,” or Specialty Advertising, as they are called in the trade, are promotion advertisements that are used to increase the visibility of your game center name among your customers and potential customers. The primary purpose for giveaways is to advertise, the secondary purpose is to spread good will and better public relations. “Giveaways” include many of the prizes you award for contests as well as other promotions incentives. T-shirts, hats, bumper stickers, buttons, pins, school bookcovers, and similar items are like “walking billboards” to spread your message. They are a good way to advertise a game center, and can be used for contest prizes or a separate promotion can be designed just for a giveaway program.

Back-to-School

Your game center can benefit from a Back-To-School giveaway promotion. Students with bookcovers, rulers, pencils or pens, highlighters, or notebooks with your game center name on them will carry an advertisement for your store throughout the school. Many of your potential players will see it. Consider imprinting the school holiday schedule, sports events schedules, and/or dates of special events, with the logo of the game center on the rulers, notebooks or bookcovers. Students will always refer to the information, and your continuous ad message will be even more effective.

These giveaways also promote good will. Expand the Back-To-School Promotion and offer bonus giveaways and/or freeplays for good grades in school. This is a good public relations step as well.



FOR PROMOTION

Sport Team Support

Either schools or private groups with team competition will appreciate your support. One way you can do this effectively is to sponsor a schedule card for each team in your area. The cards are a good low cost giveaway which are kept and referred to often, a constant reminder of your name. Football, baseball, basketball, soccer, volleyball — support whichever sports are popular in your area. The team or school photo could be on one side of a wallet size card; the game schedule and your ad message on the other. Always make the card a coupon for free plays after each game during the season. This has proved to be an excellent promotion program.

T-Shirts

The promotion item of the decade is the imprinted T-shirt. They are one of the top 10 items used for specialty advertising. T-shirts are effective because your customers will wear your ad message, and it is clearly seen among their peers. Clever slogans and attractive designs add even more advertising value to T-shirts because people will want to wear them.

There are special game T-shirts available with the designs from popular video games. These designs are licensed by the game manufacturers and must be purchased from the licensed shirt imprinters. If used, it is recommended to have these shirts customized with your game center name so your ad message is seen and identified with the specific popular game.



FOR PROMOTION

Iron-On Transfers

A T-SHIRT ALTERNATIVE

It is evident that inflation effects us all and one of the most popular giveaways, the T-shirt, may have crossed the cost barrier as a "give-away" for many promoters. The solution to this problem may be the IRON-ON TRANSFER. Today you can get T-shirt or hat transfers at a reasonable cost (a fraction of the shirt cost) and encourage players with the use of coupons to put them on their own shirts. An example coupon given with a T-shirt transfer might say:

"\$2.00 worth of tokens for \$1.00 with this coupon.
If you are wearing a shirt with this transfer on it
at time of redemption, get 4 extra tokens."



Holiday Specials

Specific items tied to holidays make effective promotion specialties to give out. Trick-or-treat bags for Halloween, gift tags at Christmas time, special Valentine cards in February or Shamrocks for St. Patrick's Day tie in for excellent promotion opportunities. These are all items that can be used for the holiday and also can work to advertise your game center.

PUBLIC RELATIONS



While video games are now getting more positive publicity than ever, there is a major problem in many areas where games are being outlawed, heavily taxed, and strictly regulated. Game center operators must be sensitive to the community attitude and work to promote positive feelings about games and the game center.

The manufacturers association (ADMA) together with the operator's and distributor's associations (AMOA and AVMDA) have employed a major public relations firm to help promote positive community relations for amusement games and game centers. Soon they should have program aids and information available to help you with this effort.

Public Relations and Community Service should be incorporated with your promotion plans. Get involved in your community needs. Plan a fund raising event for a charity that is currently popular (in the news). Communicate often with the local press. Donate your used equipment to a needy organization and get the related positive publicity. Implement programs that encourage students to do well in school (like a good grade bonus) and discourage youngster game play during school hours.

There are many public relations oriented promotions that can be effective for your game center. A few other specific ideas are:

Score for Charity a donation is made to a selected charity based on the player's score.

Community Clean-up provide litter bags (with a game center ad on them) for a local park clean-up campaign. Offer a coupon with the bag for free plays for each full litter bag.

Fund Raiser Games offer to set-up a game booth or tent at a community fund raising event. A big sign with your name over the booth will act as good advertising as well as PR.

These are just a few public relations ideas to enhance your promotion efforts. **You will find that this community service attitude will help your business and the industry overall.**



Advertising is the most widely used way to inform people about a business, product or service. By definition, **advertising** is paid communication to influence people to react. **Media** is where advertising is seen or heard, or the source of communication. Effective advertising for a game center will draw players to the location and result in significant collection increases.

To plan an effective ad program for your game center you should plan carefully. The following factors must be considered:

- **Where to advertise?**
- **How often should ads run?**
- **When to advertise?**
- **What should the ad say?**
- **How much should advertising cost?**

Your ad program should be “roughly” outlined for a year at a time. “Roughly,” so the program can be flexible and leave room for the unexpected **deals** like the “\$25.00 ad for the school annual” or “the \$10.00 per month special rate ads in the Ski Club Newsletter.” These spontaneous offers are usually cost-effective and should be included in your ad program. The “Ad Plan Outline” should answer the general questions listed above. The answers will vary depending on the size of your game center, how many centers you operate, where the centers are located and the other promotions and events that are scheduled.

The following sections offer some basic guidelines for planning an effective ad program. If the ad program is going to be large, it may be wise to employ a local agency to assist you. Otherwise, talk to the media salespeople and evaluate the alternatives before you buy.

ADVERTISING

Where to Advertise?



Media Advertising

Advertising will communicate your message to the target audience of the *media* where your advertisement is placed. Media is divided into these basic categories: **PRINT, BROADCAST and OTHER.**

Print

Newspapers, Magazines, Event Programs, Newsletters, Directories, etc.

These are some of the print media alternatives you might consider for advertising. When examining them, look at who the media goes to and how many of those people are among your potential customers. Once this is determined, the cost for your message to reach each potential customer should be evaluated.

Usually game center print ads are most effective in school papers, sport programs, youth group directories, or sometimes community newspapers. The telephone book yellow pages should be considered for a display ad. A listing in the weekly entertainment guide can be effective especially among papers where there is none or only a minimal charge for being included in the "what's happening" section.

Production costs of a print ad must be considered. Often the media will produce an ad at no charge, but if you do this be sure to ask to see a proof of the art prior to printing.

Broadcast

Radio and T.V.

Radio is a powerful medium and often cost effective for game center advertising. This is especially true if your center is located in a small town with few radio stations — or one station dominates your player and potential player market. When considering radio advertising you should evaluate the “cost per effective reach” similar to print. You can also use published ratings to determine if the ad would be cost effective.

Again there are alternatives for ad production. The radio stations usually are proficient in ad production. However, you may use an agency to help with both production and ad placement.

(NOTE: For further information on radio advertising for game centers see *Play Meter*, February 15, 1982, page 21.)

Television — usually is the most costly media per effective reach. However, sometimes smaller local stations can offer good discounted prices for less popular time slots or “pre-emptable” time, that is, your ad is broadcast only during unscheduled times when other ads have not been sold. These possibilities may be worth exploring for a Grand Opening or Big Special Event. Check with the Advertising Sales Department of your local T.V. station, or ask a reliable local agency about lower cost T.V. advertising alternatives. Be sure to check production costs which may be high. A less costly but effective ad alternative for T.V. is to use a series of 35mm slides of your location, with an audio “voice over” instead of film or video tape.

Other

Advertising Media Alternatives

In addition to usual print and broadcast media choices; **billboards**, bus, subway or taxi, **posters**, **flyer handouts**, **direct mail**, **scoreboard electronic messages**, and even **sky signs** attached to small airplanes are advertising alternatives you can consider. There are also advertising specialties or imprinted items as described earlier in this book. The **Other** media choices are often very good because they have high exposure at lower cost. You should always try to pick the best way to get your message to your customers at the best price.

ADVERTISING

How Often to Run Ads?

Frequency is important to effectively communicate your message. The media selected and your specific message will help to determine frequency. However, the more often you repeat an ad, the higher the awareness and response will be. As a general rule, it is better to repeat an ad several times in one media than to put one ad in several different media.


Consistency in advertising also increases the response rate. That is, if you run a series of ads in a campaign, the ads should remain the same or similar each time it is run. Repeating an ad creates higher recognition and better results in the long run. This is true for print, broadcast and most other advertising media. Thus, when planning your ad program select the best media to reach your target audience and run consistent ads frequently to maximize the results.

When to Advertise?

Scheduling an ad program should coincide with plans for promotions and special events. Advertising should be used to generate higher awareness and traffic, especially to enhance response to promotion programs.

Seasonality at a game center varies greatly due to many different factors. Weather, school events, holidays and the economy are the most common. Sometimes advertising and promotion can help to balance the "seasonality" better than other times. For example, if summer is slow because all of the regular game players go to camp, it is unlikely that advertising can greatly increase traffic. However, if the slow times are due to a school event, promotion and advertising to coordinate with the event can help. Use advertising to increase traffic during slower times but test this method to evaluate the results based on the possible reasons for the "seasonality."

Whether you are scheduling the time of year, day of the week or time of day for running ads, the main factor to consider is "will your target audience get the message and are they likely to respond?" Use this as a guideline to determine when to advertise.



What Should the Ad Say?

An ad should communicate information that will influence a person to respond. Thus, the ad should attract attention, deliver a specific message and solicit a response. The ad should fit the media where it will be placed. That is, it will be noticed among the other ads and be appealing to the media audience.

The design, copywriting and production of your ad can make a big difference in the response. It is best to have a consistent theme or concept that is creative and conveys your message clearly. For visual ads, the design should be dynamic but not cluttered. The same basic rules apply to radio ads as well. The message should be clear.

As noted in the section on media, often newspapers, magazines or radio stations offer ad production service free or at a low cost. If you use this service, it is advisable to work closely with them for your ad development and be sure to review the ad before it is run.

There are also advertising agencies, graphic design companies and private production studios that can produce effective ads for you. Some game manufacturers offer art material for your print ads or flyers. Atari is one that makes this "ad art" available through their operator newsletter "Coin Connection." It may be useful to consider having art for several general ads which may be designed for your game center in different standard sizes. In this event, you can have readily available custom designed ads when good print media offers are found.

ADVERTISING



How Much Should Advertising Cost?

Advertising, like any other operating expense, should be included in the budget plan for the business. The costs for ads vary greatly depending on media selected and types of ads to be produced. Usually a percentage of projected revenues is allocated to advertising and promotion. Most often 3%-8% of "sales" is used as a guideline. However, you should establish a budget based on your operation needs.

There are some occasions when a higher advertising expense is warranted. Grand openings and big promotion events should be well advertised. It is important to maximize traffic at these times to assure the success and long term impact of the event.

Once a budget is established the ad program outline can be developed. Rates for advertising media and production alternatives can be evaluated based on the budget constraints. A schedule of promotion and advertising with projected costs should be put onto a calendar. This will result in an efficient but flexible program plan for the year.

ADVERTISING

Sample Advertising and Promotion Planning Calendar

Total Projected Budget for Year \$25,000.00

	On-Going Programs	Contests/Events	Advertising	Projected Cost
JANUARY	Club Card Program Cards, Posters	10 Game Rally Contest Flyers, Posters, Materials, Prizes	School Paper Ads Radio	\$2,200
FEBRUARY		Valentine Charity Score-A-Thon Flyers, Signs, Prizes	Radio (KXXX - 1 week) Charity Newsletter	\$1,600
MARCH	Newsletter #1	New Game Intro Buttons, T-shirts, Posters	School Paper Ads	\$1,200
APRIL	Daily Drawing Tickets, Token Bowl	Video Contest Poster Materials, Prizes	School Paper Ads Radio Ads (KXXX for contest)	\$2,000
MAY		T-shirt Transfer Promo Transfers, Signs	School Paper Ads Decorate Windows	\$2,000
JUNE	Newsletter #2 (Coupon for T-shirt transfer)	↓		\$1,000
JULY		Score Card Contest Cards, Posters, Prizes	Local TV-Schedule Book	\$1,000
AUGUST		Back-To-School Giveaways, Posters Sport Schedule Cards	Community Newspaper, Radio (KXXX - 2 week)	\$3,300
SEPTEMBER	Newsletter #3	Sponsor Local Company Party	Bus Posters, School Paper Ads	\$1,200
OCTOBER	Buy Bag of Tokens Promo	Football Homecoming Promo Tickets, Balloons, Used Game for Prize.	Football Schedule, School Paper Ads Community Newspaper,	\$3,000
NOVEMBER		Celebrity Challenge Xmas Promo Club Card/Coupon Books for Gifts Posters Coupon Books, Prizes	Radio Ads, (KXXX - 1 week) School Paper Ads	\$2,000
DECEMBER	Newsletter #4	↓	Radio Ads, (KXXX - 1 week) School Paper Ads	\$1,500
TOTAL				\$22,000

(NOTE: The total does not use the entire budget to leave room for the unexpected. Also, projected costs are based on rough estimates and will vary according to location and details.)

ANTHOLOGY

The following is an anthology of some of my past articles written for RePlay and Play Meter magazines from 1976 to the present. Note the dates indicate when the article was written. The material is pertinent to promotion and public relations for the coin-game industry. Some of the articles go into greater detail on planning and implementing promotions, others are general statements about the industry. I hope that these articles will give you further insight and ideas for PROMOTING YOUR GAME CENTER.

— *Carol Kantor*

PROMOTING POSITIVE GROWTH

(More Players = More Quarters)

The image is improving; it could be better. The efforts of those who have worked to change the negative image and eliminate legal barriers are appreciated. To continue to promote this positive growth, there is still a need for a unified effort to eliminate the "Image Problem" which continues to impede the growth of this industry.

There is a tremendous market of potential players who do not put quarters in our games. All the reasons why, have not yet been determined. Nevertheless, many have expressed concern that coin games mean "trouble." Although there is not a single solution to this problem, it is feasible to initiate an effective campaign to change this image of the "trouble spot."

From the June article (Replay 1976) on Robert Nims, it is evident that a professional public relations approach can be effective. Also, most of you would agree that promotion to the public worked for Bally's "Wizard." This does indicate that public relations and promotion can work for the industry as a whole.

In order to promote positive growth in this way, it is necessary to have support from a STRONG unified base representing manufacturers, distributors, operators and associations. This support must include not only the sincere desire for change, but also a commitment of dollars to implement a professional public relations and promotion effort.

Take for example the bowling industry in the early '60s. They say that they had an image problem which deterred their growth. They took positive action. According to Keith Satter of the National Bowling Council, their organization was established in the early '40s and for about 20 years was "a battle ground for the manufacturers, proprietors, and affiliated associations." In the mid-'60s, they decided to get together to upgrade the image and promote the industry. Their affiliates donated dollars for a common goal. Since that time, this organization has sponsored about a one million dollar public relations and promotion effort annually. This effort has been quite effective with a recent study showing an over 25% increase in their target audience over the past five years representing more than 55 million people in the U.S.*

This example is especially significant because a comparison of "player" demographic profiles for bowling and "coin-op" games indicates that we are talking to the same general target population. When it comes to who is putting quarters in our games, it is *their* opinion that counts. It all adds up to More Players = More Quarters. Maybe "we've come a long way," but if the potential players have a negative opinion, there is still a need to change the image.

One of the first actions should be to determine what the player's and non-player's opinions are and better define specific reasons for any negative feelings. Further study of the bowling industry's promotion efforts, (and other similar organizations), can provide guidelines to implement a similar approach for our industry. However, these efforts will only be effective if there is unified support from all levels of the coin-op amusement business.

WHAT IS THE PLAYER'S OPINION?

The player's opinions count. They are the ones who decide to put quarters in a game. They are the ones who choose which games they want to play. Manufacturers, distributors and operators continually try to predict what the player's reaction to new games will be. Traditionally, people in this industry have relied heavily on collection reports to measure player reactions to games. Little is known about the specifics of play appeal. Thus, it is necessary to ask: What is the player's opinion?

Collection reports are the most valid indicators of the level of success of a game. Over time, collections can also be helpful in determining what specific features are good. For example, if 75% of the flipper pinball games with drop targets show better than average collections, it may be valid to assume that drop targets are a good feature.

However, if a better understanding of play appeal would be of value to your business, the best approach is to talk with the players and ask them about their opinion. This will not replace collection reports for evaluating games. But talking to the players and learning more about play appeal in games can be useful to evaluate new games and to supplement collection information for new game selection and rotation.

In a new product research program, talking to players and asking about their opinions is a significant part of the game evaluation process. This is used to supplement collection reports. Each time a new game is put on test location, a player survey is conducted to obtain additional information on the game. After playing the test game on their own impulse, players are asked what they like and do not like about the game. This information is useful to learn more about play appeal in general as well as for evaluation of specific games.

A better understanding of player opinions can be obtained by talking to players. Go to locations, play the games with players and ask them what they like and do not like about the games. The approach which is suggested here would be to set up a regular program to ask about player opinions and keep notes on their comments. Review the notes periodically to help determine what opinions players have in common about specific games and features. This is a marketing research program that can be initiated at any level.

Marketing research does not necessarily need to include long complicated questionnaires and sophisticated analysis techniques. Listed here is a simplified five step method which can be used to learn more about player's opinions.

The overall objective of this research is to decide what the consensus of opinions are on a particular subject.

1. Decide what questions you want to ask. Determine what player information is most important. For most effective results there should be a maximum of five to six questions on a subject.

For example, the following set of questions are very general on game play.

- (1) What type of game do you like to play most often?
- (2) How often do you play this type of game?
- (3) What features do you like most on this type of game?
- (4) Which specific game do you like to play most?
- (5) What is there that you like about this game?
- (6) What is there that you do not like about this game?

General information about the player should also be noted such as age, how often plays games, where plays most often, etc.

A one to two page question sheet should be prepared with space to write notes on the players answers.

2. Decide what locations would be the best to use for the player study. If you use more than one location, note this on the question sheet to determine if there are any significant differences in player opinions at different types of locations.
3. Go to the locations and talk to the players. Ask them questions and take notes on their responses. Talk to at least 50 players before starting to review their answers. The greater the number of players in the sample, the more valid the findings will be.

Usually the players are as interested in telling you their opinions as you are in listening to them. They will be eager to tell you what they like and do not like about games. They like to know that their opinion may influence what games are selected for the location.

It is a good idea to play the games with them. While doing this, ask the players to point out some of the specific features they like and do not like about the games. Note this on the question sheet after playing the game.

4. After talking to a sufficient number of players (suggest 50 to 100) you can start the review or analysis process. The easiest way to do this is to list all of the different answers to each question or topic. Count or tally how many of the players gave similar responses.

Use simple percentages to decide which responses are most representative. That is, the number of players giving a similar answer divided by the total number of players in the sample. The higher the percentage of players having similar opinions, the more representative it is of the total player population.

5. After reviewing the answers from this sample, compare the findings to collection reports to further verify the representation. At this point a new set of questions can be developed to obtain further player information on different subjects.

The player research program suggested here probably will not give all the answers to what makes good play appeal. It will however help to obtain a better understanding of the players and their opinions about games.

Game players are the ultimate source of income for the industry. Counting the quarters does indicate which games they like. But by taking the time to talk with players, much more can be learned about the games they like and why. Play appeal is the main key to high earning games. Players are the best source of information on what makes good play appeal. We really should ask them about it and listen to their opinions.

PROMOTION TO INCREASE COLLECTIONS

Have you had any player promotions or advertising on your games?

This question was asked of approximately 300 operators in a survey conducted by Atari last April. It was found that about 45% of the operators had some type of player promotion in the first three months of this year.

Tournaments and prizes for high scores on games are the most popular types of promotions among these operators. Almost 12% of the operators had placed an ad in a local newspaper or other media to promote their games.

How effective is promotion to increase collections?

The majority of the operators in the survey (70%) felt that promotion is an effective way to increase collections on games. With this as the prevailing attitude about promotion, it is evident that more operators should consider the potentials of developing a promotional program.

What is promotion?

A classic marketing textbook defines promotion as "stimulating sales through directing persuasive communications to the buyers."¹ This "persuasive communications" can be implemented in many different forms and can help to significantly increase sales or, in the case of coin games, collections. There are four basic categories for promotion: advertising, special promotions, publicity and personal selling. Each of these can be successfully applied to promote the playing of coin operated games.

Advertising is by definition communicating a sales message through a paid media. There are thousands of different ways and places to advertise. Decisions about advertising should be designed to maximize the cost/effectiveness relationship. To accomplish this the following factors should be taken into consideration.

- Where to place an ad? The main thing to consider is whether the people who will be exposed to the ad are potential customers. Also it is important to evaluate the cost of alternative media in relation to how many potential customers it will reach.
- What to say in the ad? Most importantly, the ad should clearly identify who, what and where the advertiser is. The potential customer should also be given a reason why he or she would benefit from coming to the location and playing the games.
- How to evaluate the ad? An ad is successful if it brings enough customers to the location or encourages enough additional play on the games over a predetermined period of time to increase collections more than the cost of the ad. One way to evaluate the ad response is to include a coupon to be redeemed at the location. Use this together with the increased collections to determine the response to the ad.

There are many alternative approaches in advertising that can be successfully used to promote game play. Local newspaper and radio ads are usually the better value to reach a large group of people. Sporting event programs, high school, college and community newspapers and local organization newsletters are other relatively low cost media that can be used effectively.

To promote game play in street locations such as bars, bowling alleys, restaurants or skating rinks a co-op ad program could be considered. That is, where the location owner and game operator would share the advertising costs to promote both games and the products or services of the location together.

Special promotions include a multitude of special events and programs to stimulate more game play. Contests, demonstrations, parties and other extraordinary events sponsored to attract players have been very successful to significantly increase collections and to encourage new people to play the games.

Player Tournaments and prizes for high scores are special promotions that are used most often by operators. These and other types of contests on the games are usually good because they directly relate to playing specific games and include a lot of player involvement.

Special parties for social, school, or service organizations are also excellent promotions to bring new players to the location. They are a good introduction to games and most often will draw many repeat customers. A party that is held for a charity can also be a good source for positive publicity in the local news which helps to further promote games and the location.

Publicity is "stimulation of demand by planting commercially significant news about the product or service in a published medium or obtaining favorable presentation on radio, T.V. or stage that is not paid for by the sponsor."² News coverage portraying the positive aspects of games can be one of the more effective methods to promote play. Publicity has a very strong impact on the consumer image of games and the places where games can be found.

Over the past two years there has been a significant amount of good publicity relating to coin-op games and their "new" popularity. This increased exposure has in itself contributed to the growth in the number of players as well as the number of locations that are interested in having games.

To stimulate additional positive publicity on games the local news media should be notified of any event that may have news value. A special promotion, especially if it is done in relation to a local charity or service organization often will get good coverage. Press releases and photographs (black & white) should be sent to local newspapers, magazines, etc. to announce the opening of a new location, a special event or about a human interest story. They may be printed. Possibly even sending a programming idea on games to local television or radio stations could initiate good publicity.

Personal selling is important in all aspects of the operating business. "The verbal communication to sell must convince the customers of the benefits they will receive by buying."¹ Personal selling is a key factor for opening new locations, to communicate the value of having games and to convince the location management that they will profit from them. It can also be successfully used to promote game play. Talking to the players and potential players about the games will build their interest and motivate them to play more.

Satisfied customers usually make the best sales people. "Hey, you ought to go down to that place. They really have some great games," said by a player is one of the best and most convincing sales messages.

Employees in a game location can help to sell game play. They should be familiar with the games and be able to talk to the customers about how the game plays, different strategies to try and other play features. Often just a little personal selling by location employees such as, "Have you ever tried this game? It is really good because . . ." can do a lot to encourage players to try more games. In the long run it will have a positive effect on collections.

Promotion Strategy

To maximize the benefits from promotion, operators should plan a program over a six month to a year period. More public exposure over time means higher awareness, more players and increased collections. A consistent promotional effort will be most effective in the long run.

The best promotion programs require developing a strategy. Combining the different types of promotion; advertising, special promotions, publicity and personal selling to give the optimum amount of response for the time, effort, and dollars invested. There are many alternative ideas that can be successfully used. The decision on the right promotion strategy for any operator requires careful consideration of these alternatives and planning. It is known that promotion can be an effective way to increase collections. Thus, it warrants the time and effort to plan and implement a promotional program.

¹Kotler, Philip, Marketing Management, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.

²Marketing Definitions: A Glossary of Marketing Terms, American Marketing Association, Chicago, Ill.

ON PLANNING A TOURNAMENT

YOU DECIDE TO RUN A TOURNAMENT!

Then you ask . . . "What next?" or "How do I start?"

First, the objectives and goals of your tournament must be clearly set out.

WHY HAVE A TOURNAMENT?

- to increase collections on a specific game or games
- to encourage more players to come to the location on slow days.
- to bring new people to your location
- to gain an advantage over your competitors
- to get publicity for the games and your locations

There are many other possible reasons. It is important to understand why you are going to run a tournament and that the reasons will help to generate more revenues for you either in the short or long run. Tournaments and other types of promotions can be dynamic marketing tools to reach one or more of these goals. It is essential to plan the event specifically to meet the objectives in order to see the best results.

When planning an effective tournament the purpose should dictate the details for the event. One of the objectives should always be to maximize the benefits from the amount of effort and money spent. To assure this, thorough planning well in advance is required.

Initial decisions must be made regarding the type of tournament, the size, the time frame and the scope of the event. The budget should also be forecasted and allocated within the planning function for optimum benefits and a method of evaluating the results.

The range of possibilities is almost infinite. A small scale tournament could be announced in the location via posters and word of mouth. Although this would limit the scope to regular players it can be effective and the cost minimal. Another small scale contest could be organized by special invitations to local clubs or organizations; this type low budget event can produce excellent results when planned well. Or a larger scale tournament can be run to generate wide range publicity and participation, however, the cost would be significantly more. It is best to plan the size and budget according to the objectives in order to assure the most positive response.

The details of how the tournament will be organized and implemented must be set ahead of time. What games will be included, rules for the competition, entry procedures, how winners will be determined, what forms are needed, prizes to be awarded, etc. It is also important to check if there are any legal regulations that must be complied with to run the tournament. See the Tournament Planning Check List for some of the specifics that will need to be considered.

Announcing and publicizing the event well ahead of time is essential for a good turnout. Promote in every conceivable way to generate enthusiasm, excitement and anticipation for the tournament. Posters, handouts, ads in local media, special "announcements" in the local events calendars, formal

invitations to clubs, direct mail flyers, special promo items such as decals, bumper stickers, buttons, T-shirts etc. Remember that many of the media sources, to publicize the tournament, have deadlines as much as a month in advance of their issue date, so start early. The range of promotion and publicity for the event will vary depending on the scope and objectives as well.

A large scale tournament might be better if outside sponsors help to coordinate the planning and implementation. This can be advantageous from the standpoint of sharing costs and gaining additional publicity and promotion. For example, radio stations are often receptive to co-sponsoring this type of contest; they would certainly benefit from the promotion as well and will encourage their listeners to participate. A shopping center co-sponsor could include support from a large number of retailers. They could donate prizes, help with publicity through announcements and posters to their customers, and if the tournament was held at the shopping center it would most likely draw additional attention.

A tie-in with a charity is another consideration. This is especially good when there is a major campaign for the charity with a lot of media attention, like the Muscular Dystrophy Telethon. Many times a public relations effort as part of a tournament promotion will be beneficial. Often it will help to gain media attention. It may also encourage participation by individuals and organizations that would not ordinarily include a game competition in their activities . . . but, "for a good cause. . ." they will consider playing in the tournament. This is especially good to do if the objectives include drawing new people to the location. If so, be sure to send notices to all of the local philanthropic groups.

Once all the details are planned, implementation will run smoothly. A few added suggestions to remember are:

- Post the rules for the competition in advance, including the list of games to be used.
- Be sure the games to be used are in good working order.
- Encourage participants to practice ahead of time by posting special signs over the games (if appropriate).
- Have all the prizes on display in the location.
- Keep a list of the participants with their address and phone number to notify them of future events.
- Have enough people to help with the planning and implementation of the tournament so all the details will be handled in a well organized manner.
- Make sure that the participants have a good time at the tournament.

Following the tournament it is good to review and evaluate how well it met the objectives. This is the time to start planning the next event. Each time a promotion is done there will be better ideas for future ones. Be sure to keep a record of these ideas and specific details that "are important to remember for next time." Effective tournaments will always generate enthusiasm, interest and increased game playing among participants. Because of this, they will have a positive effect on revenues.

TOURNAMENT PLAN: CHECK LIST

SET OBJECTIVES: _____

What type of tournament best to meet objectives?

Plan budget for the event.

Is outside co-sponsor(s) desirable?

Would a charity tie-in be beneficial?

Are there any legal restrictions or requirements?

Date(s) and time(s) for the tournament.

Where will the tournament be held? (At the game location or an outside facility.)

How to arrange the logistics and set up for participants and spectators.

How the event will be announced? (Posters, ads, direct mail brochures, hand-outs, newsletter announcements, press releases, etc.)

Arrange for publicity. (Send news alert, arrange for photographer, call media, pre- & post-event news releases.)

What games to include.

What entry rules and procedures to set.

Specify the rules for the tournament. (Participant qualifications, how to segment into categories for competition, how to score, number of plays, time frame, etc.)

How to match and rank entrants. (Direct challenge, single or double elimination, ladder challenge, etc. — There are books on this aspect of organizing competitions in the library.)

Specify who will moderate and referee the competition.

Choose appropriate prizes to encourage participation.

Arrange to get special promotion items to give out or sell in relation to the tournament. (T-shirts, buttons, bumper stickers, related toy items — that can be imprinted with the location name/slogan, etc.)

Determine what materials are needed. (Entry forms, score cards, posters, etc.)

What extras can be included to assure that the participants and spectators will have fun? (Outside entertainment, added mini-contests on other games at the same time, a raffle, etc.)

EFFECTIVE PROMOTIONS THROUGH SPECIALTY ADVERTISING

Look around you. How many specialty advertising items do you see? That is, usable items with an imprinted advertising message. Pens, calendars, clothing items, coffee mugs, pads of paper, key chains . . . the list can go on to over 15,000 different items that have been effectively used as specialty advertising. There is over \$2 billion worth of this kind of merchandise used by the public and most of this merchandise is given away.

Why give these things away free? Because it works and statistics prove its value. A study by A.C. Nielson for the Specialty Advertising Association in 1978 indicated that "Companies using specialty advertising enjoy 43% more patronage from the general public than competitors that do not use the medium." This study showed that it works in both consumer and business markets. More than 70% of those who received advertising specialty items purchased from the business that gave the item. More than 95% of the population is aware of the medium and about two-thirds have favorable attitudes toward specialties as an advertising method.

When compared to other media advertising, (such as newspapers, magazines, TV or radio) specialty advertising has three major advantages.

TARGET ABILITY. The advertiser can control who receives the advertising message with specialty advertising better than other media alternatives. Selectivity of the audience maximizes the effective reach as well as assuring that the item used fits the target audience.

LASTING ABILITY. Each time a specialty item is used, the advertising message reaches the target audience. An item that is used over and over again offers even more exposure than most other media. Thus, when the cost per exposure is evaluated, the value of the advertising investment is greater.

MOTIVATIONAL ABILITY. To receive a specialty item of perceived value is an additional reason a customer will respond to an ad message. The creative flexibility of this medium, with thousands of different items and ways to use them, offers the advertiser many alternatives to maximize the effectiveness of a promotional campaign.

The average consumer is "bombarded" with about 1500 ad messages each day. Thus the advertiser is faced with the problem of how to make his message stand out among the others and appeal to prospective customers. This is achieved through creative copywriting and design, repetition of exposure and the perceived value of the product or service to the customer. The impact of specialties helps combat the "clutter" of competitive ads as well as adding value to the message.

Specialties can be used in combination with other advertising techniques. For example, a direct mail campaign can double its response with the use of a specialty offer. Savings and loan companies often use this technique to draw new customers. Game locations could implement a similar program. Send a postcard to local high school students offering a special "XYZ HIGH" notebook and a free play when they bring in the card. You can have

notebook covers designed with the high school name and the game location name for an impact ad with exposure each day the student goes to class. Remember, most direct mail programs get a 3 to 5% response, but with a free item offer it goes up to 10 to 35%. Yours may be even higher.

Calendars make excellent promotions that continue to work throughout the year. McDonalds distributed a calendar with "Money Off" coupons each month. The response was spectacular. Even high responses have been seen using a "free gift" offer in a calendar (one example had 75% redemption on this type promotion). They could be given away at Christmas time. It is sure to pay off during the next year.

Specialty advertising has the bonus value of creating good will in the community. Items can be sold for fund raising or as a service, as in baseball caps for a youth group team. One community service idea would be to sponsor a city "clean up." Provide imprinted trash bags "XYZ Game Center Wants GOOD CLEAN FUN!!!" or some appropriate slogan/design. Get together with the Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanas or other organization and sponsor a contest to be publicized in all the local media with news releases, photos, etc. The person bringing in the greatest number of filled trash bags wins a reconditioned game. Additional tie-in promotion can be done with posters and bumper stickers following the clean-up theme.

Player Clubs have been started by some game centers to promote more frequent visits by regular customers. Specialties can be used to help promote this club concept. Membership cards are designed to give free games each week for a year and are sold for about \$2.00 (a \$13.00 value). The club makes an ideal promotion base for the location. The membership list can be used to mail other special offers or newsletters to encourage additional play. Membership privileges can extend to special competitions or package play deals. Club patches, pins, T-shirts, trophies for high scores, etc. are excellent specialty tie-in items that will build player enthusiasm.

Awards for high scores or special achievement on specific games are extra incentives which build activity in a game location. There are many good specialty items that are appropriate awards which in turn become an advertising device for the location. Patches, pins and T-shirts are just a few items that should be considered for this purpose. Posters to advertise the items players can win will certainly induce extra play on a game.

The most effective specialty advertising is coordinated into a total program to achieve a specific objective, to reach a specific audience and to maximize the long term impact of the campaign. Selecting the right items to tie-in with an effective promotional theme is important. The items should fit the image and message advertised.

Design and copy for the imprint are equally important. Specialty items act as signs in the public eye. The imprint must reflect what is desired to be remembered. For example, an arcade in San Francisco, Musee Mecanique, designed a very distinctive logo, a mechanical bird with a lady's face wearing boots. This design is used on T-shirts, pins and other specialties as well as signs and ads to promote the arcade. As exposure grows, the logo becomes a clear identification of the place. Such visual identification over time has a strong impact. Two years ago would the image of a Space Invader* have meant anything to you? Today it represents one of the most well-known products in the industry. A slogan can also create an effective image. Atari "Play Me" buttons distributed at the trade shows have become identified with the company name after three years of use. If a slogan is to

be used, remember that it must be short, preferably three words or less.

The possibilities with specialty advertising are unlimited. There are many different ideas that can influence customer actions. Specialty promotions can be used by any business. It has been used by the coin-op industry at all levels. Manufacturers use all types of items — such as key chains with an engraved service number, hot line labels, ink pens, frisbees, whistles, etc. and distributors use them too.

Operators can use specialties to advertise for new locations as well as for promotion to players. A desk item for a prospective location owner can work to heighten his awareness of your company. Other applications have wider range indirect effects. Imprinted matchbooks on cigarette routes are often used. An impact message can be good to generate awareness and interest in your business. Offering to print scorepads for the local bowling center with free game coupons on them is another specialty idea. Similarly, supplying the golf tees at a driving range or baskets for tennis balls at the racquet club can be an incentive to influence business.

Promotion using specialty items is effective. However, the value is the greatest when it is well planned into a total program to meet a specific goal. The development of a good promotion, including advertising, publicity and specialties, takes creativity, attention to details and follow through. There are professional promotion counselors who can assist with the design and implementation of a program to best fit your needs.

USING PROMOTION TO FIND NEW LOCATIONS

"How can promotion help me find new locations?" Quite often operators ask me this question. Yes, promotion can help. Promotions are designed to publicize and create demand for products and services. This is part of the necessary steps to obtain new locations for coin-op equipment.

There are many different techniques that can be used in an effective promotion to reach this specific objective. Media advertising in any type publication or broadcast source; direct mail programs have hundreds of different formats; news releases on information or events of public interest; and creative aids for a well planned sales presentation are among the most common promotional devices. A good promotion program will use a combination of these methods designed for *high impact*. The content or theme and implementation plan must maximize the effectiveness to accomplish the set goals.

High impact is a key point in promotion. The promotion must be noticed to be effective. Thus, the first step in planning to use promotion should be to get the attention of the prospect. Here's a general outline of one way to plan a promotion:

- I. Set a Specific Objective to be Reached
- II. Outline a Strategy for the Promotion Program
 - A. Define target market or prospects to reach
 - B. Establish method of initial contact, i.e., Direct Mail, Telephone, etc.
 - C. Plan follow up techniques for leads generated
 - D. Develop a well planned sales presentation
- III. Close the Sale!!!

EXAMPLE

Here's a specific example to give you some ideas that may work for you.

OBJECTIVE: To obtain 5 new locations in a specific geographic area.

Define Prospects: Convenience Stores, Casual Sandwich Shops/Restaurants, Singles Bars, Racquetball Courts.

Canvas the area and prepare a list of 50 to 100 possible locations that fit the set requirements. Get the name of the owner/manager, address and phone number to prepare a formal prospect list. You may also want to make notes on the location for future reference in the promotion/sales process (i.e. where in location games fit, customer profile etc.)

Initial Contact: High Impact Direct Mailer

Get imprinted mailer bags that say: "Don't Take Any Wooden Nickels" with your company name/logo and phone number. Fill the bag with imprinted wooden nickels that say: "We change wood to silver" and your company name/logo and telephone number. A letter and postage paid reply card is inserted with the bag of wooden tokens:

"Dear (name) _____:

If you want us to turn these wooden nickels into silver quarters, call me or return the enclosed reply card. I'd like to meet you to show you how we do this. We offer guaranteed profits from your minimal investment of only a few feet of space in your (name type location)_____, (operator name) _____ can help boost your weekly revenues by as much as (\$_____) (accurate estimate amount for location type) per week with no up-front dollar investment by you. Contact me today to set a convenient meeting time ..."

A plan to mail between 5 and 10 bags per week is best. It should only be as many as can be followed up at any one time period.

Follow Up: A telephone contact plan is set.

One week to 10 days after the mailing, each prospect is called to request a meeting. Note: Try to determine the slower times at the location to assure the call will not be at an inconvenient time.

Sales Call:

Design special presentation materials to carry through the Wood to Silver theme and to increase the impact of the sales approach. A brochure is developed with a cover photo of a bag of wooden nickels and a bag of quarters side by side . . . Title "How to Change Wood To Silver." The inside pages of the brochure includes charts and illustrations showing how the income from games in a location grows over a year. All specific information about game placement, maintenance and collections procedures and policies are clearly spelled out.

Other written materials specific to the location type can also be used. In addition to income potential information, previous customer testimonials and photos of games being played in other similar places will add to the impact of the sales presentation. Also materials to answer typical questions such as: "Doesn't this just attract kids to loiter?" or "What about vandalism?" can be prepared ahead of the meeting. Letters from other location owners, news articles and actual data can be used to answer these questions in a positive way.

Close the Sale:

Using the promotional approach can help to get the prospect's attention and to influence the demand for your service . . . The steps to close the sale are the same. Good selling techniques work for obtaining new locations. Promotion techniques will enhance the selling efforts.

Promotion is effective. However, using promotion to influence sales requires an investment of extra time, effort and money. The return on this investment will significantly increase the chances of making the sale.

The example presented here is only one idea that can be used. The range of creative high impact promotions is wide. The *most important* step when starting a promotion program is to start with a clear objective.

THE GRAND OPENING DECISION

Now that you invested \$100,000 or more to open the doors of a new game center location . . . What about a GRAND OPENING??? If you open the doors to lines of eager players waiting with pockets full of coins to play games a GRAND OPENING may not be needed. On the other hand, this miracle of customers waiting to play does not always happen. The OPENING promotion is usually worth a little extra effort to start the demand growing for your amusement center.

Purpose Of A Grand Opening

The first promotion of a location is the one that will set the stage for what follows the first year and after. Some of your objectives for the GRAND OPENING would be to:

- Inform prospective players of your existence.
- Influence prospective players to come to your location.
- Begin to build a positive image for your game center in the community.
- Publicize your game center to increase awareness and establish your business as a contributor to the good of the community.

What To Do At A Grand Opening

There are hundreds of different ideas for Grand Opening promotions that are effective to meet the objectives you set. The following are some ideas that might be considered:

INFORMING PROSPECTIVE PLAYERS — You should decide who the prospective players will be in your location. (Target Market.) General demographic statistics say players are typically 14 to 25-year-old males. However this differs greatly based on the profile of your location and the neighborhood you can make an educated guess at who the target will be. (Note: be flexible, this may change over the first six months to a year.) Once decided who — **INFORM THEM.**

Advertising in newspapers, magazines, radio, tv, billboards, sport programs, newsletters or by direct mail are some of the alternatives. You must decide which is most cost effective for your needs. Evaluate the "Cost Per Effective Reach" — that is, Who does the publication go to? How many are my prospective players? and, How much does it cost to reach them?

Mailing alternatives usually will be the most effective to reach the people you want to inform. One recommended approach is to mail post cards with incentives to families with children who live within a 3 to 5 mile radius of the location.

"Attention Getters" at the location will also help to inform the people of where you are. For example, lease a hot air balloon with your name on it to fly near your location during the opening festivities. This usually attracts a crowd.

INFLUENCE PLAYERS TO COME — Incentives to get a prospective player to come into your location are varied. Some ideas that have worked are: Invite a celebrity to challenge players on a favorite game; Have a drawing for

prizes; Give away promotional items like hats, t-shirts or frisbees to people who come in; send out cards with numbers on the "if your number matches the one on our special game you win a prize" . . . The incentive you use must have enough appeal to draw the prospective player to your location.

BUILD A POSITIVE IMAGE — The good image of a clean, fun place for youth to enjoy playing is essential. Most important is to be sure the place and games are clean and in order.

Do something for the community during the **GRAND OPENING**. Contact the local Chamber of Commerce or the Newspaper Editor to find the best and most newsworthy cause to support. Do something special for this popular cause. Let a youth organization use the center for a fund raiser where collections go to the organization or their charity. Hold a competition between charity representatives and donate the game to the winning group.

Always support the local community to build and maintain a good image. Buy ads from the Little League, sponsor youth sports teams, loan a game for the church youth group dance, throw a party at your center for the winning high school sport team. All these type efforts go towards building a positive image.

PUBLICIZE IN THE COMMUNITY — Get in the news for all the good things you do for the community. It is important to maintain good relations with the press. Make a list (with names, addresses, and phone numbers) of all the local newspapers, magazines, newsletters, radio and tv stations and any other publications that you see in your area. This press list should be used for invitations for your **GRAND OPENING** and other events. Send them news bulletins on what is going to happen at your game center and press releases with photos after the events. Keep the media informed and invite them to come to your location often — this is how you get positive publicity.

These are just a few of the suggestions for **GRAND OPENINGS** and other promotion efforts. There are differences from location to location so you must evaluate what will work and be most cost effective for your needs. If you are opening a new game center location and considering a **GRAND OPENING**, possibly you should use a promotion agency to help with your opening events. Often they can make sure all the details go smoothly while giving you more time to work on the day to day needs to get the games in, the electricity on, the interior decorated, the employees hired and all the other things to open the doors of your new game center.

SEGA CENTER T-SHIRT PROMO THAT BEAT THE HIGH COST OF T-SHIRTS

The month of October last year marked one of the more popular promotions at 15 California Sega Centers and their pizza and games location, PJ Pizzazz. The promotion resulted in over 15,000 "t-shirts" or other wearables advertising the distinct Space Fury eye and Sega Centers all over the West Coast cities where their game centers are operated. This Sega Promotion featured "do-it-yourself" iron-on transfers. Thus, the promotion investment was only a few cents per "shirt" as compared to the few dollars per "shirt" if a custom t-shirt had been used.

The t-shirt transfer used for this Sega Center promotion was a full color Litho printed transfer with a high quality reproduction of the Space Fury game art. They used a 9" x 12" size transfer. These transfers can be applied easily to t-shirts or other fabric items at home using a standard hand iron. Once applied, the high quality transfers are permanent, washable and colorfast. They can be put on many different items such as shirts, jackets, canvas bags, fabric banners or smaller size transfers can go on hats as well. The application flexibility of iron-ons is another advantage over screened t-shirts.

Sega Centers added coupons on the backing sheet of their transfers to give extra value to the promotion. This gave an extra incentive for players to come back and redeem the coupons after they have used the transfer. There were 4 coupons imprinted on the Sega Center backing sheet each with specified times for redemption: Two for \$2 in extra tokens when players buy \$5 worth, one for 2 free tokens, and one for 5 extra free tokens when a SEGACARD, their player's club, is purchased. Reilly Leonard, Sega Center's Director of Marketing, reports that the response to this promotion program was excellent. "The transfers were given free to SEGACARD members and sold for \$1.00 to non-members," he explained, "over 84% of the 20,000+ transfers we purchased were distributed during the promotion." Although the exact percentage of coupons redeemed was not available, the company was pleased with the results.

The cost of iron-on transfers is low and the addition of a coupon incentive for players to put the transfer on a shirt or other garment gives it more value. For example a 6" x 9" transfer with a custom design in 2 colors, including special coupons on the back, at a quantity of 2,500 would cost about 50¢ each (including screen and set-up charges), the equivalent imprint on 2,500 good quality t-shirts would cost about \$3.00 per shirt. Thus the alternative of transfers represents a significant cost savings. They are also available with glitter background or reflective printing that reflects lights and becomes a "safety" item.

It is possible to get a commercial heat transfer machine and encourage players to bring their shirts to your game center to get the transfer applied. A supply of blank t-shirts can be purchased for those times when you prefer to give out an imprinted t-shirt rather than a transfer for home application.

There are many different ways to use this type of promotional product. The iron-on transfers can be given to club members or sold like the Sega Centers program or they can be used as prizes for contests. A contest could be developed especially for finding different places to iron the transfers

on! In this case it would be best to use a smaller size transfer and encourage players to iron them on "something" — wearables or any other item they use. The coupon on the back of the transfer can have a higher value if the player is wearing or carrying "something" with the transfer on it (i.e., "4 extra tokens if you are wearing this transfer.") The reflective transfers make an excellent "safety" giveaway — possibly for Halloween time. Promote the offer of a shirt or jacket iron-on that reflects headlights of cars at night as a safety factor for trick-or-treaters, for bike riders or joggers anytime. This adds public relations and community service to your promotion.

Sega Centers used this iron-on transfer concept successfully in their October promotion and will definitely consider a similar program again in the future. Consider using iron-on transfers as an alternative to t-shirts for your game center promotions. They can also be used as a way to customize the popular licensed game shirts that are now available with your own name and advertising message.

RADIO ADVERTISING FOR A GAME CENTER

Radio speaks loudly to game players an average of 3½ hours per day. A game center can talk to players via radio and generate more traffic and higher revenues for their locations. Radio is one of the best high impact advertising alternatives in a majority of areas. There are over a half-billion radios in the U.S. By selecting the right station and implementing a strong campaign targeted to the game players in your area, your message will be received loudly. The response to radio advertising can be one of the most effective among the media alternatives.

FUN 'N' GAMES amusement centers in the New York/New Jersey area use radio ad programs extensively to draw players to their 3 locations. "I feel we get an excellent response to the radio ads," reported owner Alex Gottilla. "It is one of the most cost effective mediums I have used." Gottilla runs 10-plus spots per week over 2 week periods in his radio ad campaigns. His ads target different groups via three different stations. Rock for the 20-year-olds; youth oriented for the teens and easy listening to draw the older group have all been used to promote FUN 'N' GAMES. With an average radio budget of \$2,000 per month, Gottilla believes the radio ads generate revenues that more than justify the ad costs. "One of the stations offers a 'Free Money' card to their listeners — We offer free games to card holders when our ads run on their station. Over 200 people per week come to get their free games with the card." Gottilla verified.

Although FUN 'N' GAMES had excellent response to radio in a large metro area, other operators in larger cities avoid radio due to cost and reach beyond their local area. Gary Irving of DREAM MACHINE noted that they have successfully used radio ads in smaller towns where they have game centers, but have not felt the response would justify the cost for radio time in the larger cities where they operate. Similarly, Stephen Goot of Total Vending Service in Atlanta is using a saturation radio campaign on three stations for his game center in a small town. However, he says the cost to do similar ads for his Atlanta locations would not be justified. "The area of draw for our game centers is small in relation to the radio station reach, thus, we advertise to our target audience more efficiently with other media alternatives in the Atlanta area," Goot explained.

On the other hand, Goot was enthusiastic about the small town radio ad program. This campaign entails 300+ spots for the opening weekends and a strong follow-up for succeeding weeks. The 30 second spot ads were professionally produced in Atlanta for the game center. "Bringing a 'new voice' to the area for our ads attract more attention than the alternative of having the local DJ produce them," Goot explained. The average cost for his ads is under \$5.00 per spot for a saturation campaign in this small Tennessee town which is certainly a good value.

Each market area is different. Thus the cost effectiveness of radio must be carefully evaluated for each case. A smaller area is often more conducive to radio advertising due to lower cost and efficient reach to the target market. Nevertheless, radio can be effective in larger cities as was found by FUN 'N' GAMES in the New York metro area. Listener rating information is available on all radio stations and can be used to evaluate the stations in your area.

Select the stations that will appeal to the game players in your location. Rock format for example tends to reach older teens and 20-year-olds with an emphasis to male. They usually promote “good-times lifestyle” and would fit most typical player profiles. Ask your players what stations they like to verify the official rating information on the stations.

When considering a station, find out about possible promotional programs. Do they offer trades, tie-ins, or giveaways in their package? These alternatives may reduce the overall cost of advertising and offer a good way to use older equipment. To get extra publicity a special event, like a tournament, might be co-sponsored by the radio station and a popular DJ can make an appearance to challenge the champion players. You can also consider trading a game for air spots. The stations are often looking for good prizes and will accept the value of the games as a trade.

Once the station is selected, the ad program schedule is considered. When starting a new campaign it usually takes approximately 18 to 24 spots per week to reach the average listener 3 times. Thus, it may be better to use one station more frequently than to dilute the number of exposures in order to use multiple stations. Your objective must be to attract the listeners to your message and motivate them to visit your game center.

BACK TO SCHOOL PROMOTIONS

Back-to-School Promotions can be an excellent opportunity to combine a public relations event with a traffic building promotion to introduce new players to your game center. If your game center is located and targeted to students, at either the high school or college level, a Back-to-School-type promotion should be one of your bigger events of the year. Early summer is the time to start planning your promotion for August-September.

Find The Best Back-To School Public Relations Tie-In:

Research the current status of the schools in your area. What do they need? What issues are being considered for the upcoming school year? With school budgets being cut, there are probably some fund raising activities needed. Band or sports team uniforms, a new facility needed, a special-ed program that needs support ... whatever issues you find to use as the public relations part of your Back-to-School program will help you to get additional publicity as well as good assistance and response from the related organization you choose to support.

Contact the school or organization and offer to work with them to hold a fund raising event at your game center. This event can be a special party, a contest, or just a day where proceeds go to the cause. It must be well publicized and supported by the organization you are helping and the community.

For example, if the event is to help get new sports equipment for the school, you should be sure that all the school teams and cheerleaders are encouraged to participate and help with the event. One idea is for each team member to be given 20 tickets to sell for a game raffle at your game center event. They also can help to be sure all their friends attend the events. If more people come to the fund raising event, more new players will be introduced to your game center as a place to go for fun.

Use Back-To-School Giveaways And Prizes

"School supplies" are always good tie-in in giveaways or prizes during a Back-to-School promotion. Pens, pencils, notebooks, bookcovers, school calendars, rulers, erasers, lunch boxes, notepads, and all the other items that students buy for school can be effective advertising for your game center. As an idea, put your game center name, logo and ad message on a notebook with a calendar of events for the school year. The calendar can include your promotion dates together with sport events and holidays to encourage your customers to think of your game center more often. This can also be a profit making promotion for your game center.

Offer a school supply package for anyone buying \$5.00 or \$10.00 worth of tokens. You can select a number of different supply items with your ad message on them to give out for this promotion offer. You can select a "package" costing around \$3.00 for a \$5.00 token purchase and most likely earn a profit. But more important, this offer can work to bring new customers to your game center, to continue to advertise your game center as students use the supplies, and to create good will among parents and teachers because you are offering supplies that would need to be purchased together with the "bonus" of tokens for playing games.

Back-To-School Contest

Create a special REPORT CARD for game play during your Back-to-School Promotion. Select five games in your center for the contest. Post signs above each game giving the players a grade (A, B, C, D, F), depending on their score. Players receive a report card for the contest and play each game to see what their grade is. The grades are recorded on the player's card. When all grades are filled in a "grade point average" can be computed. Different prizes are awarded based on GPA. Everyone who participates should get some type of prize. The better the GPA, the better the prize awarded.

GAME PLAY REPORT CARD	
NAME: _____ AGE: _____	
ADDRESS: _____ _____	
GAME	GRADE
MS. PAC MAN	B
JACK THE GIANT KILLER	A
FANTASY	C
ROBOTRON	B
DONKEY KONG	A
GRADE POINTS	
A = 4.0 B = 3.0 C = 2.0 D = 1.0	
GPA = 3.2	

School Competitors

If your game center is located near two competing schools it may be good to start the school term with a friendly competition on games. One possible way to do this would be to contact the football coaches from each school and suggest a pre-season video or pinball competition among their rival teams. Be sure to get the cheerleaders involved as well. Most schools are sports oriented, thus it makes a natural promotion tie-in for your game center.

School Sports Support

Any promotion that ties in with a popular school sports program can be effective. If school spirit is strong, the game center can offer a team support button or spirit ribbon to students who buy \$1.00 worth of tokens. The buttons or ribbons can be for a specific game or general for the school. Place an ad in the school paper or sport event program with the type offer and also put a sign in your window about the promotion showing samples of the items you offer. The response should be good and will bring more players to your location.

Introduce Good Grade Bonus Program

Free plays for good grades is a popular promotion and also creates good will among parents and teachers. Your Back-to-School Promotion is the best time to introduce this good grade bonus program. A sign in the game center is sufficient to advertise the program, however, it would be good to include the good-grade-bonus information in your other school targeted advertisements.

Start Planning Now

Plan your Back-to-School promotion program early. Decide what contests are appropriate, what special offers you plan to make and what Public Relations tie-in will get the best publicity. Arrange for ads to support your promotion. Purchase all the materials and supplies needed for the events, contest cards, signs, flyers, prizes, giveaways, etc. Remember to send out a press release announcing your programs 6 to 8 days before the event. Be prepared for your Back-to-School Promotion and make it the best one of the year!

FOR PROMOTION — FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS

Promotion is done to increase business. Public relations is done to improve public image. *DO BOTH CONSISTENTLY* and the long range profit picture will be maximized. The game center will be viewed as a place for fun and entertainment and this will have higher traffic and play activity.

There are programs for promotion and for public relations. That is, events, policies, special offers, etc., that are specifically designed to meet the promotion and P.R. objectives simultaneously. Here are a few examples to consider:

Donation of Collections for a Cause

Select a local cause that is getting a lot of media attention. For example, in San Francisco a "Save the Cable Car" event has high public interest. Hold a 4 hour special fund raiser at the game center in "Prime Time" to maximize attention. All collections go to the cause. Send notices and invitations out two to three weeks in advance to all local organizations, civic groups, schools, etc. Send out press releases on the event. Invite the "cause" coordinators to sell t-shirts, buttons, etc. during your event. The extra people you draw for the fund raiser will introduce new potential customers to your location. The publicity will also be good. And results should be effective to build traffic and image.

This is just one example of how game collections donated to a popular "cause" can be used for promotion and P.R. Anytime a good P.R. fund raising event can attract people and publicity it should be considered. If every game center did two collection/donation type promotions a year the "image problem" might be reduced significantly.

Play Rewards for Good Grades/Good Deeds

An effective and popular program for promotion and P.R. is to give "Free Plays for A's" in a game center that attracts students. The free play incentives for your players to "earn" can be expanded to other areas as well. A "Clean the Park" campaign offering free plays for bags of park litter can be good. Any use of free play offers for player achievements or good deeds will add the P.R. element to the promotion in order to create a more positive image for the location.

Score for Charity

A special contest can be designed to raise funds for a charity and to attract new players to the location as well. Approach local organizations to participate in a contest where the points scored represent donations to a popular charity. This is similar to a walk-a-thon concept. Participants get money pledges for points scored. This type of contest has many variations and is equally good for expert and novice players because even a lower score represents a donation to the charity. Encourage attendance by sponsors as well as players. While waiting for their turn on the official contest games, participants will enjoy the other games in the location.

Public Service or Support Giveaways

Give out some item for public service. Safety reflecting stickers for bicycles, Halloween bags with safety tips, bumper strips promoting a local event, or some other item for safety, education or another worthy cause can be given out at a game center to draw players and demonstrate a P.R. attitude. The “giveaway” should be advertised well to the community. It can be done as a “with purchase” offer or just a “come by” to pick it up to attract new customers to the location. Any way it is done the item should be useful for a service or support application and should continue to advertise the game center name.

Whether it is a donation, a free play offer, a giveaway, or a contest — promotions should be planned with a public relations slant — or public relations programs should be planned with a promotion slant to add to the effectiveness. And both should be done often to keep the traffic and image high.

ADVERTISING THE GAME CENTER BY DIRECT MAIL

Direct mail can be a very effective way to advertise and build traffic in a game center. Because the cost per person reached is higher than most alternative advertising media, it is essential that all elements of a mailing program are carefully planned. The list to mail to, the number of people on the list, the format of the mailing, the content of the piece and the timing of the mailing are all important considerations to maximize the advertising effectiveness.

The List

You want to reach game players and potential game players who can and will go to your location. The best list for a mailing list includes correct names and addresses of all people who fit this description. If the mailing reaches only eligible players then your list is 100% efficient. However, to reach all the potential market it is most likely that some of those who get the mailing will not be interested. The objective is to minimize this "non-interest" group.

Players First. Your present customers are the best prospects for return visits. Get the names and addresses of these players on your list. Start a player club, offer birthday list specials, have a newsletter sign-up, whatever method used, this list should be included in your direct mail ad programs.

Potentials and Unaware Players. Those target people who are not current customers but are likely to play games at your center are more difficult to identify. It is probable that the "profile" of these people is similar to that of your current customers. Therefore, if you know who current customers are, it is easier for you to find a good list of *Potentials*.

Age; occupation; if students — what school; where live; hobbies and other recreation preferences; organizations they belong to; or any other factors that might lead you to a mailing list with similar demographic backgrounds. School or organization directories are excellent resources for lists. Selecting those groups that your current customers belong to and adding them to your mail list is a good way to build a good potential list. Sometimes these specialized lists are available for sale through mail houses or civic organizations, however, the accuracy is not as high as direct sources.

General Population. Neighborhood household lists are available from most mailing houses. Using these will not be as effective as the carefully selected "target lists." If you do choose to mail to a household list be sure to limit the geographic reach to a few miles around your location. However, a possible lower cost alternative to this would be to hire teenagers to distribute flyers or door-knob-hangers to homes in the neighborhood.

How Many to Include on List. "The larger the list, the higher the response" is a good general philosophy assuming that the actual people on the list are real candidates for responding. The size of the list can be based on the population statistics in your geographic area and project responses.

If there are 10,000 households in a 3 mile radius of your location and 60% have children between 12 and 18 (if this is your market), possibly a list of

these 6,500 homes would not be unreasonable to get a good response if the offer has good drawing incentive.

If you have a list of 1,000 known players and a list of 700 other local students at nearby schools and 300 different target club and organization members in your target the response will most likely be equivalent to the general household mailing. That is, a qualified list will often get a three times higher response than a general population list.

It is recommended to have as many names as possible. However, limit the list to the best qualified players and potential players who would be likely to go to your location. It is actually better to have a smaller list of people who are in the appropriate "target" than a large list of "maybes."

What To Send

Your direct mail ad must be noticed, it must be read and it must influence the response you desire. This is accomplished by the format, the design and the content of what is being mailed. Each detail can affect the outcome.

Review the mail you receive for a month. Much of it is advertising. What advertising mail do you notice? What do you read? What do you respond to? Using your own experience is one way to evaluate what your own mailer should be. Also, ask your associates and/or friends to save those direct mail ads that they notice as reference for you. Analyze what is good and not so good about each piece.

Most people look at the return address. If they know the sender or identify this with an area of interest they will most likely open and/or read the piece. Also, if the mailer is visually interesting or attractive it will "rise above the clutter" and be noticed.

RULES FOR DIRECT MAIL ADS

A direct mail ad must persuade the recipient to read the ad and respond.

A direct mail ad must offer something of value to the reader.

A direct mail ad must communicate benefits of the offer.

A direct mail ad must ask for an immediate response.

These rules should be followed when developing a direct mail ad for a game center. The mailer must catch the recipient's attention with design, encourage them to read the ad, communicate the value and benefit of playing games and ask them to come to the game center to play "today." Coupons or special offers act as extra incentives to help persuade the reader to respond.

Visual interest in a direct mailer for game locations can be accomplished with format and design. A picture of the games being played or of a new game being introduced, a high-impact design relating fun and excitement, or an unusual shape or material can be used to attract attention. Post cards or self mailers are the most cost effective formats and with good design can be the best choice for game center mailings. Some unusual ideas might be: send out a bag with a wooden nickel inside that can be redeemed for tokens; send a key in a small envelope that may open a "token treasure chest" and encourage players to come try to open the chest; send out a

puzzle or game quiz that is fun to keep and can be brought to the game center for a prize or free plays.

A game center mailer should tell the reader to come play games and why they will benefit from this. "Come experience the exciting action of the newest video game . . . play free . . . challenge your friends. . ." The copy should be enthusiastic and persuasive. To maximize readership use a general rule of thumb — "Keep the copy to 100 words or less." (NOTE: There are exceptions to this rule, such as, newsletters.) Generally, shorter copy gives a higher probability of readership.

Direct mail ads can be used to promote a contest or special event, introduce a new game, generate traffic at slower times, or develop a new group of customers. Whatever the objective, the mailer should be planned and designed to get the maximum response.

When To Send

Timing can be a critical factor for direct mail advertising. If it is to promote an event, the mailer should arrive at least 5 to 8 days ahead of the necessary response date. A direct mail ad will have more visibility if it arrives on a day with fewer other pieces of mail.

It is easier to note *when not to send* a direct mail ad. Avoid Monday delivery; high political mail times, one to four weeks prior to elections; or one to three weeks before Christmas. Otherwise, ask the local post office about any particularly high mail traffic times in your area to avoid.

If the mailer includes a high response type offer consider staggering the mailing. For example, if you sent out a coupon for 5 free plays to each member of a family and it is going to 10,000 homes, consider sending 2,000 per week for 5 weeks to spread out the response rate. This will help to keep the traffic level from being erratic due to the coupons.

How To Measure Response

Set a response objective in the planning stage. This should be weighed against the campaign cost. Although direct mail is one of the most expensive advertising alternatives, it also can have the highest efficiency and response. Thus, cost per mailer and cost per response must be evaluated.

Always keep a count of responses using coupons or a tally. Divide by the total pieces sent to determine rate of response. This will vary depending on what is offered. Compare your direct mail programs to see what works best with your list.

A general population mailing is considered excellent with a 1-2% response. A qualified mailing list should have a much higher rate. One recent game center's direct mail ad got a 35% redemption rate on a coupon for 4 free tokens. Even higher rates of responses have been reported for top mailer designs with good offers sent to qualified lists.

To evaluate your direct mail ad program first set a value to each response; a player redeeming a coupon may spend more on that visit (\$3.00), also may be a candidate for more visits later (\$1.00), response value is arbitrarily set at \$4.00. Set a response goal: Target for 800 responses from a qualified list of 2,500 (32%). Set a budget based on this projection: \$3,200.00 or \$1.28 per mailer including design, production, printing and postage. If the projected response rate is met or exceeded then the ad program is a success.

There are other factors to consider for a direct mail campaign, such as, send by first class or bulk mail; use a mailing service to maintain lists and handle mailing or not, etc. It is an excellent way to promote a game center. But like all other promotions, it requires planning and execution of many details to make a direct mail ad campaign a success.

Consider all the details and plan a direct mail program for your game center. It can be a most effective way to build traffic and profits.

THE PROMOTION CATALOG

THE PROMOTION CATALOG is a supplement to this book including many of the materials and items that can be used to implement these promotion ideas.

Business Builders is a promotion and marketing services agency specializing in the coin-amusement industry. Carol Kantor, founder and president of this agency, has been involved in industry marketing and promotion since 1976. For additional promotion assistance call Carol Kantor at: (408) 446-4400.

This book was written to help with planning a successful promotion program for your game center.



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